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transpiring in many localities; and if we wish to obtain a clear and connected narrative of some public circumstance which has transpired in our own neighbourhood, the chances are that a newspaper published perhaps hundreds of miles away will furnish the first authentic intelligence which we shall possess. Thus people go to sea-ports to meet friends or relatives from abroad; they lodge near the water to be certain of knowing when the packet comes in; and yet it often happens that the morning papers on the breakfast table give them the first notification of the arrival of those they are so anxious to meet. And thus it is very often at Southampton.

Some years ago Paredes escaped from Mexico, and came to Southampton in a West India steamer. He arrived almost *incog.*, and was scarcely aware that he was known on board. Some slight delay arose before the steamer could get into dock, in consequence of the state of the tide, and Paredes had no idea that any communication had been made with the shore. To his utter astonishment, the first sound he heard was his

own name, for a newsboy was bawling to the passengers from a morning paper,—“Second Edition of the *Daily News*. Important News from Mexico. Arrival of Paredes in Southampton.” Since that time the Mexican monarchist travelled all over Europe; but he has been heard to declare, that the greatest wonder which he found in this part of the world was the rapidity with which news was obtained and circulated in England.

Such are the arrangements by which our ocean mail steamships are made to furnish the current history of the world at the shortest notice; and as every such vessel puts into port, it is delivering up to public knowledge the records of the proceedings of all parts of the globe. As we dwell upon the “means and appliances” thus continually rendered available for the promotion of commerce and civilisation throughout the world, we see something of the relation which the progress of the mechanical arts sustains to the promotion of the highest interests of all.

MR. GOULD'S HUMMING-BIRDS.

THE humming-bird (*trochilidae*) belongs, according to the classification of Linnæus, to the genus *picæ*, or parrot, and is scientifically described as having “a fabulated thread-like bill that is crooked and longer than the head; the upper mandible being a sheath to the lower, and the tongue like a thread divided in two and tubulous.” Linnæus was acquainted with comparatively few of the species, but the researches of Mr. Gould has enabled him to collect and describe more than 300 specimens of the interesting family—the smallest and the prettiest of birds.

The humming-bird is a native of the continents and islands of America, being distributed, more or less, all over the New World from Canada to Cape Horn. Mary Howitt tells us that—

“In the radiant islands of the East
Where fragrant spices grow,
A thousand thousand humming-birds
Are glancing to and fro;”

a fact for which the poetess must be allowed to claim a sort of poetical license; for, in truth, the real *trochilidae* are not found in the east at all. But Mrs. Howitt's general description of the beautiful little bird is so exact that, notwithstanding the error she commits in placing it in the wrong hemisphere, we cannot but complete the quotation—

“Like living fires they flit about,
Scarce larger than a bee,
Among the dark palmetto leaves,
And through the fan-palm tree.
“And in the wild and verdant woods,
Where stately moras tower—
Where hangs from branching tree to tree
The scarlet passion-flower.
“Where on the mighty river banks,
La Plate or Amazon,
The cayman, like a forest tree,
Lies basking in the sun.
“There builds her nest the humming-bird,
Within the ancient wood,—
Her nest of silky cotton down,—
And rears her tiny brood.”

The members of this interesting family are described as flitting about from flower to flower, suspended, as it were, in a manner peculiarly their own, without apparent motion, while the rapid action of their wings “in cutting the air, just as a sabre would, produces the humming noise to which the name is attributable.” Where is the person, inquires Audubon, the celebrated American naturalist, who, on seeing this lovely little creature moving on humming winglets through the air, suspended, as if by magic, in it, flitting from one flower to another with motions as graceful as they are light and airy,

pursuing its course over our extensive continent, and yielding new delights wherever it is seen; where is the person, who, on observing this brilliant fragment of the rainbow, would not pause, admire, and instantly turn his mind with reverence towards the Almighty Creator, the wonders of whose hand we at every step discover, and of whose sublime conceptions we everywhere observe the manifestations in his admirable system of creation? There breathes not such a person, so kindly have we all been blessed with that intuition and noble feeling, admiration.”

The variegated dress of the humming-bird is almost beyond the reach of art to depicture—all the most beautiful metallic colours, from the deepest gold and the most glowing crimson, to the darkest blue and the palest yellow, being intermingled in a manner quite impossible to describe.

“What heavenly tints in mingling radiance fly!
Each rapid movement gives a different dye;
Like scales of burnished gold they dazzling show,
Now sink to shade, now like a furnace glow.”

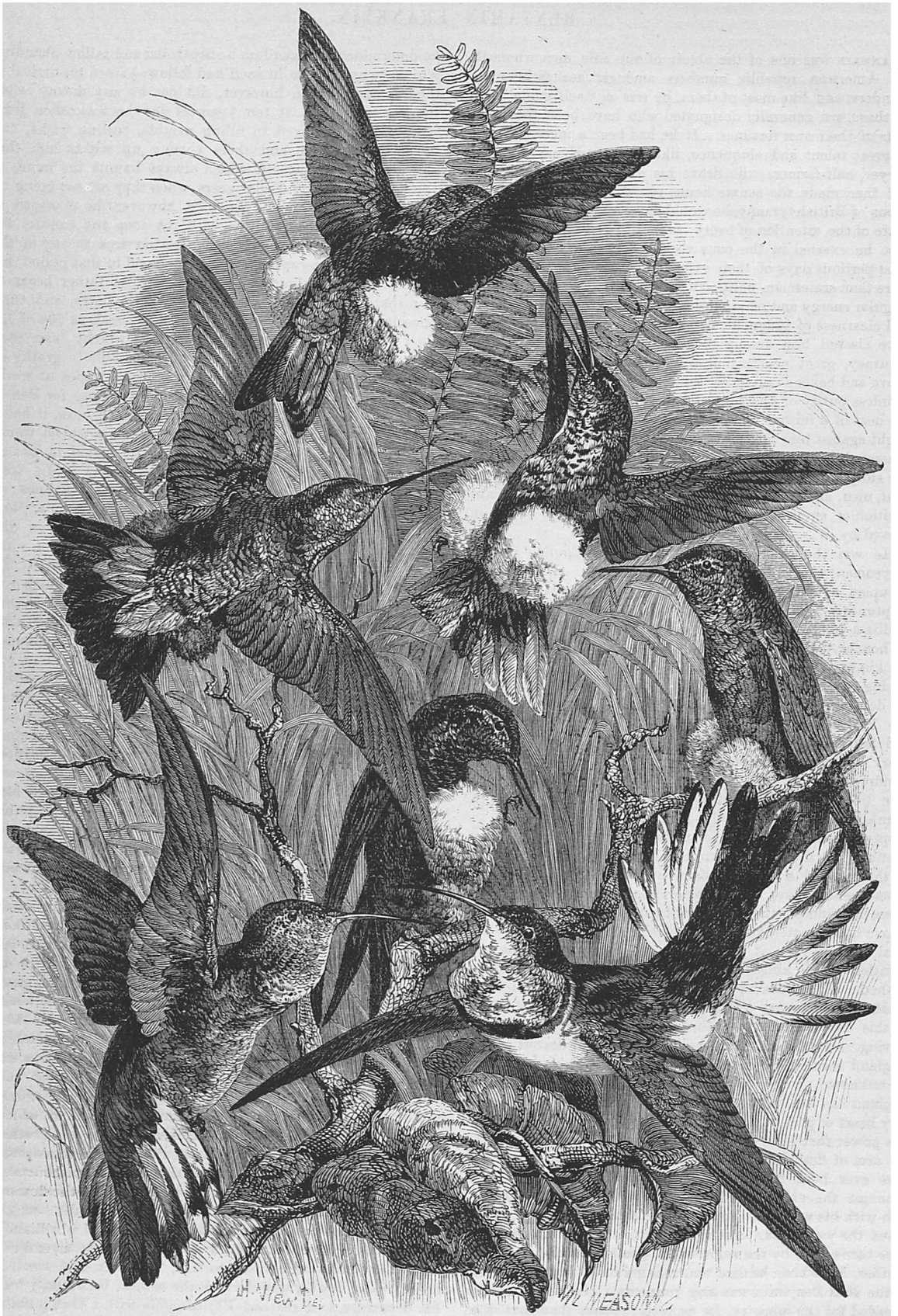
“I have seen,” says Wilson, the writer of these lines, “the humming-bird, for half an hour at a time, darting at those little groups of insects that dance in the air on a fine summer's evening, retiring to an adjoining twig to rest, and renewing the attack with a dexterity which sets all our other fly-catchers at defiance,”—a statement which at once settles the question of the humming-bird being a vegetable feeder. To enable it to prosecute its useful and necessary war upon the multitudes of insects peculiar to the tropical climates in which it principally abounds, the humming-bird is provided with a long and slender bill, and a tongue, consisting of two muscular tubes, which is capable of being protruded to a considerable distance. But besides this, the tongue, its only instrument of attack, is covered with a glutinous saliva, to which the insect adheres immediately it is touched, whence it is drawn rapidly into the mouth of the beautiful and apparently never-resting bird.

In the Zoological Gardens the humming-birds, from which our artist has selected a few of the most remarkable specimens, will be found “preserved” or “set up” in a manner so nearly approaching life as to enable the visitor to realise, without any very great stretch of imagination, their life amid the flowers and fruits of their native forests in the west.

The humming-bird, though it charms us with the brilliancy of its plumage, the exceeding delicacy of its formation, and the grace of its movements—

“While richest roses, though in crimson drest,
Shrink from the splendour of its gorgeous breast,”

must yield in one important particular to its more plainly dressed brethren of colder climates, for it has no song! Its beauty addresses itself to the eye rather than the ear—a kind



GROUP OF HUMMING-BIRDS, FROM THE COLLECTION EXHIBITED AT THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, REGENT'S PARK.

of recommendation, indeed, much more fitted to the gorgeous scenery of the flowered festooned forest of the tropics than to

the comparatively dull and monotonous green and brown or the sleepy woods and fairy-haunted dells of the Old World.